Joy of all who sorrow art thou and protectress of the oppressed, feeder of the hungry, consolation of travelers, haven for the tempest tossed, visitation for the sick, protection and aid for the infirm, staff of old age, O, all pure Mother of the Most High God, Hasten, we pray, to save thy servants.

We welcome all who seek to know Christ in His Word and in His Church.
A Message from Father Peter

A Time for Reflection and Growth?

February is upon us and for us, in the church, it is a real transition month. Since Pascha is late this year, we will not be in the season of Great Lent till March. We have time to transition from the feasts of the theophanies of Christ (Nativity, Baptism, and Presentation) to the beginning of the Great Lent. This is a gift since many of us rushed quickly to forget 2020 and we may not have given much thought about how we have changed in this last year. I offer some suggestions and hope that they become part of your Lenten preparation.

**Patience:** We all know that patience is something good for us but, for many, we struggle with it. We all were confronted with patience in this past year. Yes, the questions “How long?” “Can you believe that we still have restrictions?” Schools open, closed, and open again. All the things that we thought we were able to control now were out of control. We went to the stores and found out the items that we took for granted were no longer on the shelves. We had to readjust to home life and isolation. How many times did you say to someone “You are on mute,” in the past year? Patience, a spiritual discipline that we try to focus on in Great Lent we now can build on from our experiences in 2020.

**Charity, or Love:** God is love and we are called to live in His love. To show care, and concern, for others. The love that we understand from God is sacrificial. It is in giving of ourselves to the other that we express the love of God in our lives. What were the sacrifices we made for the other this year? Staying at home? Wearing masks? Calling a neighbor or member of MOG to find out if they were doing well, or needed something? How did we express that love in the sacrifices that we may have had to make in our home lives? For some of us, we needed to find space to work at home. Some of us found we now had more time. For some preparing meals, every day was new, and we began to share all these new experiences with others. We want to grow in the love of God and neighbor during Great Lent. What have you learned about abiding in God’s love?

**Language:** Language for us in the Orthodox Church is extremely important for our spiritual lives. Words, thoughts and actions are all expressions of where we are spiritually. Many of us found new and creative ways to use technology in this past year. Have we used it to express love and care for others? Did our communication methods connect us with others, or did we find ways to be divided and enter conversations that increased our anger, isolation, and bring us further from God? The Word of God created us and took flesh for our salvation. How were our words and language expressions of the Incarnation of Christ in our lives to others? We pray often in Great Lent to keep us away from idle talk; set a watch over the door of my lips; help us to find words of praise and thanksgiving. What have you learned about the spiritual gift of discernment? How can you build on restraining from idle talk this coming Great Lent?

**Isolation:** Many of us have felt the feeling of isolation, depression, or even despair during this past year. God understands this reality; and Christ himself felt this, especially when he cried out to his Father, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me?” We have the stories of saints who have struggled with this feeling. The feeling is real, and specific for each of us. The spiritual discipline is to use this feeling to remind ourselves of our dependence upon God. We are never alone. We begin Great Lent with the Prokimenon, a psalm calling from the feeling of isolation, depression and fear, “Turn not your face from you child for I am afflicted. Hear me speedily come to my soul and hear me.” We are not alone only because God is with us, but he has given us a community of faith to turn to during these times.
Prayer, reading of scripture, corporate worship and fellowship with other believers all help us to feel connected. What were the spiritual tools you chose to use this past year that you can strengthen and witness to others as we move through the season of Great Lent?

We have all changed during this past year and need to understand these changes. February is the time to reflect and set the priorities for us to focus on during the season of Great Lent. We have the time, we are given the resources, we just need the will. I pray that February is for us a month of discernment and growth. May we use this time to prepare ourselves for the spiritual efforts and disciplines of Great Lent, so that together we come to the Holy Pascha of our Lord and trample down the darkness of the past and walk in the everlasting day of His Resurrection.
What are you doing during the pandemic to keep yourself sane? The Sisterhood has been meeting virtually each month to help support and uplift each other during this isolating time. We have participated in activities, led by different women, to inspire creativity, intellectual discussion and spiritual renewal. January’s meeting was led by Carrie Elmore, who presented a class on herbs and their healing properties. She then showed us a video on how to make herbal salves. Here is a list of the herbs we discussed and their beneficial uses:

- Basil – skin, acne, wrinkles, antifungal
- Rosemary – reduces puffiness, improves memory (eaten), arthritis, eczema, hair-rinse
- Thyme – antiseptic, chest rub, mouth wash, steam for sinuses
- Sage – antibacterial, decongestant, muscle rub, mouthwash
- Lavender – calming, relieves headaches, soothing
- Lemon Verbena – tea lifts the spirits, inflammation, muscular pain
- Comfrey – heals wounds, broken bones, sprains, regenerates skin cells
- Calendula – heals wounds, eczema, anti-fungal, antibacterial
- Dandelion – diuretic, anti-inflammatory
- Plantain – insect bites, stings, cuts, eczema

Carrie showed us which parts of the plant to use for its proper usage: flower, stem or root. She told us when to use it internally, as in making a tea, and when to use it externally, as a salve. We were asked to soak our favorite herb in olive oil, six weeks before we met. Then, with the wax she gave us, she instructed us how to make a healing salve using these ingredients. It was suggested that the Sisterhood could make salves and sell them as a fundraiser for the church! These days, when health is on everyone’s mind, having knowledge of how to prevent and treat your own ailments is extremely helpful!

Our next Sisterhood meeting will be held on Zoom on Friday, February 12th at 7:30 pm. Lana will lead the group in a lesson on drawing natural objects from life. Creativity nurtures the soul and lifts the spirit! Please join us! 😊
Services, Feasts & Special Events

Online Services Continue

Please be advised that, weather permitting, Sunday liturgical services will be held outdoors at MOG @ 9:30 A.M. (All are welcome. Everyone is required to wear masks and follow physical distancing mandates.) When services are held inside, capacity is limited and you must sign up in advance.

We will continue to stream the services online for those of you who are unable to attend the live services. You can view the live stream and recast at https://www.facebook.com/mogprinceton/.

Monday, February 1st

(CANCELLED due to snow)

*Tuesday, February 9th

6:00 P.M.  Vesperal Liturgy for Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

7:00 P.M.  MOG Zoom Discussion Forum on the Encyclical issued by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America entitled, “We Rejoice Even in Tribulation”: An Encyclical of Hope (https://www.oca.org/holy-synod/encyclicals/encyclical-hope).

*It is time to gather as a community and learn from each other: This is a good opportunity for us to gather as a community and to discuss this very important and informational Encyclical as we move through this time of the pandemic and plan to reintegrate as a community later this year. Please make every effort to attend. Zoom link to be sent.

Please continue to watch for announcements in your email. Thank you.

View the master MOG calendar at:
Announcements

Sunday School
We have discontinued Sunday School until further notice. Please feel free to focus on the Bible passages that will be read during the streamed Divine Liturgy that Sunday with your child. We read what the Saints have said about those passages, and talk about how the Biblical teachings can be applied in our own lives.

Please pray for us.

Donations for Arm in Arm
Mother of God continues to support Arm in Arm with food donations, placed in the collection bin at the side entrance of the Church.

Please, as you are shopping, think of those in our community who are in need and bring your offerings to the Church.

❖ Catechetical Class has begun. Anyone interested in joining, please contact Fr. Peter
❖ Adult Study via Zoom -- Please send suggestions for consideration to Fr. Peter
❖ Confessions by appointment, please contact Fr. Peter
❖ Please send in your 2021 pledge cards

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Wisdom of Our Church Fathers

Concerning that which Hinders us on the Path to God

Spiritual Mistakes

The worst kind of sin is not to acknowledge that you are sinful. (St. Caesarius of Arles, Commentary on I John, 1:8)

Flee from self-love, the mother of malice, which is an irrational love for the body. For from it are born the three chief sinful passions: gluttony, avarice, and vainglory, which take their causes from bodily needs, and from them all the tribe of the passions is born. This why we must always oppose self-love and fight against it. Whoever rejects self-love will easily conquer all the other passions with the help of God: anger, despondency, rancor, and the others. But whoever is retained by self-love will even unwillingly be conquered by the above-named passions. (St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 2.59,8)

There are lots of those who speak but few who do. However, no one should distort the word of God by his own negligence, but it is better to confess your own weakness, not hiding the truth of God, so that together with the breaking of the commandments you do not also appear guilty of an untrustworthy explanation of the word of God. (St. Maximos the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 4:85)

Whoever does not want to know the will of God is mentally walking a path next to a cliff, and easily falls with any wind. If he is praised, he is proud. If he is rebuked he is angry. If he eats pleasant food, he is drawn into bodily passions. When he suffers he weeps. When he knows something, he wants to show that he knows. When he doesn't understand, he pretends to understand. When he is rich he puts on airs. When he is poor, he is a hypocrite. When he is full, he is bold. When he fasts he is vainglorious. When he is denounced he loves to argue, while he looks on those who forgive him as fools. (St. Mark the Ascetic, Homilies, 2.193)

Do not try to decide a difficult matter by means of disputing, but that which is enjoined by the spiritual law, namely patience, prayer, and thoughtful hope. (St. Mark the Ascetic, Homilies, 1:12)

Understand two thoughts, and fear them. One says, "You are a saint," the other, "You won't be saved." Both of these thoughts are from the enemy, and there is no truth in them. But think this way: I am a great sinner, but the Lord is merciful. He loves people very much, and He will forgive my sins. (St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XVII.1)

There are people who, when they encounter inability to understand, do not ask the Lord. But one must immediately say, "Lord, I am a sinful man and I don't understand
as I should. But give me understanding, merciful One, as to how I must proceed." And the merciful Lord then inspires them as to what to do and what not to do.  
(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XX.4)

Sincere faith is the renunciation of your own mind. It is necessary to make your mind naked and present it like a clean chalkboard to faith, so that she can draw herself on it like she is, without any admixture of foreign sayings and attitudes. When the mind's own attitudes remain within it, then, after the attitudes of faith are written on it, there appears a mixture of attitudes. The mind will be confused, encountering contradictions between the actions of faith and the sophistries of the mind. Thus are all who approach the region of faith with their own sophistries... They are confused in the faith, and nothing comes of it but harm.  
(St. Theophan the Recluse, Thought for Every Day of the Year, 11.04)

Whoever prematurely begins a work that is above his strength receives nothing, but only brings harm upon himself.  
(St. Isaac the Syrian, Homilies, 11)

No one ever accomplishes good by means of evil, because they are themselves conquered by the evil. On the contrary, evil is corrected by good.  
(St. Barsanuphius the Great, Instructions, 15)

If we weave by day and undo at night, nothing gets woven. If we build by day and destroy by night, nothing is ever built. If we pray to God and do evil before Him, the nothing is woven, and a house for our soul is not built.  
(St. Nicholas of Serbia, Thoughts on Good and Evil)
From St. Basil’s House

Due to illness, we did not hold Bible Study this past January nor were we able to have an offering of groceries or toiletries available to our neighbors. For this we are truly sorry.

God willing, we will resume our Bible study with Judith leading on Wednesdays, February 3, 2021, with a light breakfast at 9:15 A.M. at Saint Basil’s House in Trenton, N.J., where all will wear masks and maintain the social distancing protocol and then onto our live streaming of the studies at 9:30 A.M. At the end of the study, each person can take home groceries and personal products.

Please keep the MOG ministry of hospitality at Saint Basil’s House in your prayers.

Until we meet again, may we each have grace to walk with the Lord, to be a blessing to others, and to be kept safe in the palm of His hand.
Righteous Simeon the God-Receiver was, according to the testimony of the holy Evangelist Luke, a just and devout man waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him (Luke 2:25). God promised him that he would not die until the promised Messiah, Christ the Lord, came into the world.

Ancient historians tell us that the Egyptian pharaoh Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.) wished to include texts of Holy Scripture in the famous Library at Alexandria. He invited scholars from Jerusalem, and the Sanhedrin sent their wise men. The Righteous Simeon was one of the seventy scholars who came to Alexandria to translate the Holy Scriptures into Greek. The completed work was called “The Septuagint,” and is the version of the Old Testament used by the Orthodox Church.

Saint Simeon was translating a book of the Prophet Isaiah, and read the words: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son” (Is 7:14). He thought that “virgin” was inaccurate, and he wanted to correct the text to read “woman.” At that moment an angel appeared to him and held back his hand saying, “You shall see these words fulfilled. You shall not die until you behold Christ the Lord born of a pure and spotless Virgin.”

From this day, Saint Simeon lived in expectation of the Promised Messiah. One day, the righteous Elder received a revelation from the Holy Spirit, and came to the Temple. It was on the very day (the fortieth after the Birth of Christ) when the All-Pure Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph had come to the Temple in order to perform the ritual prescribed by Jewish Law.

When Saint Simeon beheld their arrival, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that the divine Child held by the All-Pure Virgin Mary was the Promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. The Elder took the Child in his arms and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

There is a Christian epigram (Number 46) in “The Greek Anthology” which is addressed to Saint Simeon. It tells the righteous Elder to receive the Child Who was born before Adam, and Who will deliver Simeon from this life and bring him to eternal life. A similar idea is expressed in the Aposticha (Slavic use) for the
Forefeast of the Nativity of the Lord (December 24). There the Mother of God refers to her Son as “older than ancient Adam.”

Simeon blessed the All-Pure Virgin and Saint Joseph, and turning to the Mother of God he said, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2:34-35).

The holy Evangelist continues: “And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband for seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not leave the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming at that very hour, also gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption at Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38).

The holy righteous Simeon the God-Receiver died at a great age (Tradition says he was 360). His holy relics were transferred to Constantinople in the sixth century. His grave was seen by the Russian pilgrim Saint Anthony, the future Archbishop of Novgorod (October 8) in 1200.

*Reprinted from the Orthodox Church of America website oca.org*
2020 Stewardship Update Through December 31st

2020 Pledged Total: $113,660
Received To-Date by Pledged Members: $118,630
Received To-Date by Friends of MOG: $11,065
Total Received To-Date: $129,695

Budgeted Income to have been received by this date: $189,800

2020 Budget: $189,800

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Prayer Requests

“…and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

James 5:16, NKJV

Commemoration of the Living Servants of God:

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who for the sake of Your eternal mercy and loving kindness became man, and suffered crucifixion and death for the salvation of all; Who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, where You hear the prayers of all who call upon You humbly and with their whole heart: incline Your ear to us, and hearken to the prayer which your unworthy servants offer as a spiritual sacrifice for all Your people.

Have mercy, O Lord, upon:

Debbie Baktis, needing a kidney transplant
Kathy, Jackie DeLarato’s sister-law
Olga Mezina, friend of Lana
Maria Rolleri, Joe Elchak’s daughter, and Maria’s daughters, Carson & Addison
Daniel Morgan, Alex Todoroff’s grandson
Nina Robinson, sisters Joyce Smith and Margie Scott
Deacon John (Russell) Komline & Judith Komline
Benjamin Stell

All Victims of the Coronavirus, Those Recovering & Those on the Frontlines of the Pandemic

May we join you in pray for all of those on your mind; all of those in your prayers, and all of those in your heart. Lord Have Mercy.

Please send the names of those you would like included in the prayer requests list to: ladyofleesure@yahoo.com. Also, let Nina know when those on the list have recovered (Praise be to God).

COMMEMORATION OF THE DEPARTED

Richard Lenord - Memory Eternal

Daily Bible Readings

For a listing and links to the daily scripture readings go to http://oca.org/readings. Bookmark this site for readings for every day of the year! ✡
Please Pray for the
Mother of God Joy of All Who Sorrow Orthodox Church
as we move forward.

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